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Bomb probe takes Baxley to Texas to quiz ex-resident

BY TOM SCARRITT
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Alabama Atty. Gen. Bill Baxley flew to Texas Tuesday to interview a former Birmingham resident who might be an important witness in the attorney general's probe of local bombings.

Baxley talked with Bobby Frank Cherry, 47, and Cherry's attorneys in the Grand Prairie, Tex., police station Tuesday afternoon. He left Texas without Cherry, police officials there said.

An attorney for Cherry said his client denied any knowledge or involvement in the Birmingham bombings of the 1960s. "He thought the question of his involvement had long since died," the attorney said.

The attorney said Baxley's trip "was of an investigative nature" and there was no indication Cherry would be indicted.

"They have been trying to arrest me for 15 years," Cherry told a Texas reporter earlier in the day. "I don't know anything about that bombing," he said in apparent reference to the Sixteenth Street Church explosion in which four young black girls were killed.

Baxley's office refused to say Tuesday where the attorney general was or to comment about the questioning of Cherry.

CHERRY, WHO LIVED in Birmingham until about eight years ago, told Texas reporters he is a pipefitter for a Dallas company. He lives with his family in Grand Prairie, near Dallas.

Cherry was questioned more than a year ago about the bombings, according to sources in Texas and Birmingham.

noon, according to Texas sources, and left in the late afternoon.

Cherry's attorney said his client was puzzled by the renewed questioning and he did not know if Tuesday's interview would mark the end of the matter for the Texas man or not.

"We're waiting now to see what the attorney general will do," the lawyer said.

Baxley has blamed the 1963 church bombing on the Ku Klux Klan. Cherry's attorney said he did not know if Cherry ever belonged to the Klan.

Baxley's trip to Texas came the day after a Jefferson County grand jury indicted a 73-year-old North Birmingham man on four counts of first-degree murder in the 1963 bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

Robert Edward Chambliss, of 2505 32nd Ave. North, was arrested at his home Monday night.

Chambliss was one of three men arrested years ago after the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing and charged with illegal possession of dynamite. Chambliss, Charles Cagle and John Hall were convicted on that charge in Birmingham Recorder's Court and fined $100.

However, all three of the men's convictions were thrown out when the cases were appealed to Circuit Court.

Chambliss is being held without bond in the Jefferson County Jail. A hearing was scheduled by Circuit Judge Wallace Gibson for 1:30 p.m. Oct. 6 to determine if bond should be set.

Sources have said Georgia lawyer J.B. Stoner also was indicted. The exact charges against Stoner were not revealed immediately, but it is believed he will be accused of involvement in the 1958 bombing of Bethel Baptist Church, 3233 29th Ave. North.

Baxley has spearheaded the long investigation of the church bombings. He announced last February he was reviving the case, and it was his assistant who presented evidence to the grand jury.

BAXLEY ARRIVED in Texas for his interview with Cherry shortly before